

Inspection Connection

Seafood Inspection Program • U.S. Department of Commerce/NOAA

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Federal Activities Inventory Reform Act (FAIR)

by Richard Cano

The Federal Activities Inventory Reform Act (FAIR) directs Federal agencies to issue each year an inventory of all commercial activities performed by Federal employees, e.g., those activities that are not inherently governmental. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) is to review each agency's Commercial Activities Inventory and consult with the agency regarding its content. Upon the completion of this review and consultation, the agency must transmit a copy of the inventory to Congress and make it available to the public.

The FAIR Act has defined two types of activities that are performed by Federal employees: those activities that are "commercial" in nature and may be contracted out to the private sector, and those that are "inherently governmental". The FAIR Act defines an "inherently governmental function" as one "that is so intimately related to the public interest as to require performance by Federal Government employees."

NMFS/NOAA has decided that the Seafood Inspection Program's functions are commercial in nature and therefore its activities can be contracted out to a private firm or firms. It is the Program's intention to formally challenge this decision under provisions of the FAIR Act. We believe that NMFS/NOAA intentions are in conflict with the purposes and criteria of the FAIR Act and will not benefit the participants in our Program or U.S. consumers/taxpayers.

As we proceed with the appeal process, we value any input from the participants of the Seafood Inspection Program and all other sectors of the seafood industry, as well as other interested parties such as Federal/State agencies and consumers.

Look Who's Talking

Here's what some of our participants are saying:

"I feel the USDC Lot Inspection Program had been a tremendous success to our entire seafood operation as a company. As you are probably aware this partnership has been in place for the past five years this November. It has allowed us to provide our customers a very special and unique service that is not provided by any other retailer in our trade area. We now find that our suppliers send us the highest quality seafood because they know that it has to be the absolute best to meet our high standards of inspection. Which means increased customer confidence, and in many cases extended shelf life and less shrink. Another side note to having the Inspection process is we are the only company in our seven state trade area that can advertise in-store as well as in our weekly ads, that we provide the service free of charge to our customers. This inspection program has been very successful and has helped us here at PDI to become one of the best seafood programs in the country, and I would highly recommend it to others in the industry."

*Andy McCann
Perishable Distributors of Iowa*



Training Abroad

by Abigail Villalba

The National Training Section continues to offer and conduct training courses not only in the United States, but abroad.

In May, a local association of seafood farmers in La Ceiba, Honduras, invited the USDC Seafood Inspection Program to teach a HACCP and sanitation course to a group of approximately 40 students in Spanish. The group included representatives from many levels of the seafood manufacturing industry.

In November, at the request of the Jamaican Ministry of Agriculture, we provided HACCP and audit training to a group of 30 people composed mainly of veterinarians, health inspectors and laboratory personnel. The course lasted five days and included a visit to an aquaculture facility.

Working as part of a training/inspection team provides for a more effective and practical application of the material presented because each member contributes their own individual expertise and experience to the program. The teams help each other by remaining flexible in unfamiliar settings and focused on our primary objectives without losing the integrity of the program presented.

The training experience not only gives the opportunity to work with other professionals in our Program but also gives us the unique opportunity to “blend” the theoretical side of training with the practical side of inspection work. Training allows everyone to better understand their responsibility for the quality and safety of the food supply. The knowledge results in improved food safety and quality, contributing to increased confidence and demand for food products.

Our mission is to continue our training efforts to assist companies improve the quality and safety of seafood products marketed in the United States and internationally.

Samuel McKeen Retires

by Kimberly Young

After more than 30 years of service to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Samuel McKeen retired effective January 3, 2003. Sam was diligent in seeing that the Program continued to grow. He dedicated eight years to the Seafood Inspection Program with enthusiasm and determination. All of Sam’s efforts will be missed.



Third Party Verification Audits

by Kenneth Aadsen

Seafood Inspection Program auditors may perform third party verification audits, upon request, by interested parties with a financial interest in the auditees seafood products. The audits may be of domestic or foreign facilities, and the scope may range from the facility hygienic state, product evaluations, specific processes, or full system verifications. Audit standards may include the regulatory requirements of the competent authority, international standards, or specifications of the buyer. Foreign processors that receive full system audits may be placed upon the USDC Foreign Verified Facilities List..

With increasing frequency in this time of heightened biosecurity concerns, domestic importers and foreign processors are requesting additional inspection services overseas before products are loaded for export to the United States. The Program has always had this legal authority, but has limited this activity by policy decisions; however requests by interested parties may require re-evaluation of the existing policy.

Inquiries for foreign third party verifications should be directed to Dr. Kenneth E. Aadsen at Kenneth.Aadsen@noaa.gov



Customer Service

by Monty Berg

The Seafood Inspection Program is pressing forward with improved inspection protocols with several companies. Inspection services are on the rise with several national retailers. We expect this to continue as sales increase and store level product losses decrease.

We continue to see new contracts with distributors that service the cruise ship industry. Cruise ship buyers are particularly interested in net weight certifications and sizes due to concerns over end use yields and portion control.

Our export inspections to the European Union are seeing a modest increase. The E.U. accepts certificates issued by the FDA which are free of charge. However, several companies desire the products they are buying to be physically inspected and verified prior to shipment. Again, net weights, size, even speciation have become important issues for overseas customers. U.S. companies that offer that verification seem to have an advantage in getting the sale over those that do not.

In South Florida we expect to certify a processing facility for the application of filtered smoke. This will be the first such USDC certified facility in the United States. There are lots of good things happening with the Seafood Inspection Program, and more importantly, for those companies that use our services.

TRAWLING THE NET

Want to know what happened to GlobalFoodExchange?
Visit www.GlobalFoodExchange.com

Iowa State University has educational materials that give the public the tools they need to minimize their risk of foodborne illness.

Go to www.extension.iastate.edu/foodsafety

QUESTION CORNER



Does the USDC offer Auditor Training?



Yes. The Seafood Inspection Program offers a certification service for government and private personnel who desire an unbiased third party to train and evaluate the performance of persons who will be used to audit food safety and quality systems.



What is the "Verified Facilities of Fishery Products Treated with Carbon Monoxide and Filtered Smoke Gas"?



This is a list developed and published by the Seafood Inspection Program of facilities that are currently in compliance with USDC policies for the use of filtered smoke or carbon monoxide gas.

(Questions for the Inspection Connection may be mailed to Kimberly Young, USDC/NOAA/Seafood Inspection Program, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 10860, Silver Spring, MD 20910 or e-mailed via our web page at seafood.nmfs.noaa.gov)



Copies of this newsletter can be obtained at seafood.nmfs.noaa.gov or you can be added to the mailing list by mailing the following to: Documentation Approval and Supply Services Section, USDC/NOAA, 3207 Frederic Street, Suite B, PO Drawer 1207, Pascagoula, MS 39568-1207.

Name: _____

Company: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____

Zip Code: _____



CALENDAR

HACCP Workshops for Industry

The Industry HACCP course is an intense three-day course that covers all aspects of the HACCP concept as it relates to seafood harvesting, processing, transporting, distributing and retailing.

March

11-13 Miami, FL
18-20 Los Angeles, CA
25-27 Hampton, VA

April

22-24 New Bedford, MA
29-May 1 Las Vegas, NV

May

20-22 Baltimore, MD
20-22 San Francisco, CA

June

2-4 Seattle, WA
10-12 Gloucester, MA
17-19 Orlando, FL

Upcoming Trade Shows

Look for the USDC Seafood Inspection booth at the following show(s):

Marine Hotel Association

Orlando, FL
April 14-15, 2003

European Seafood Expo

Brussels
May 6-8, 2003

West Coast Seafood Show

Long Beach, CA
October 12-14, 2003

American School Foodservice Association

Reno, NV
July 20-23, 2003